

HOUSE BILL NO. 1997

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee on General Laws

on _____)

(Patron Prior to Substitute--Delegate Murphy)

A BILL to amend and reenact § 2.2-3701 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; definition of "meeting."

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 2.2-3701 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 2.2-3701. Definitions.**

As used in this chapter, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Closed meeting" means a meeting from which the public is excluded.

"Electronic communication" means the use of technology having electrical, digital, magnetic, wireless, optical, electromagnetic, or similar capabilities to transmit or receive information.

"Emergency" means an unforeseen circumstance rendering the notice required by this chapter impossible or impracticable and which circumstance requires immediate action.

"Information" as used in the exclusions established by §§ 2.2-3705.1 through 2.2-3705.7, means the content within a public record that references a specifically identified subject matter, and shall not be interpreted to require the production of information that is not embodied in a public record.

"Meeting" or "meetings" means the meetings including work sessions, when sitting physically, or through electronic communication means pursuant to § 2.2-3708.2, as a body or entity, or as an informal assemblage of (i) as many as three members or (ii) a quorum, if less than three, of the constituent membership, wherever held, with or without minutes being taken, whether or not votes are cast, of any public body. Notwithstanding the foregoing, for purposes of meetings of school boards during a state of emergency declared by the Governor pursuant to § 44-146.17 in response to a communicable disease of public health threat as defined in § 44-146.16, "meeting" or "meetings" means the meetings including

work sessions, when sitting physically, or through electronic communication means pursuant to § 2.2-3708.2, as a body or entity, or as an informal assemblage of (a) as many as four members or (b) a quorum, if less than four, of the constituent membership, wherever held, with or without minutes being taken, whether or not votes are cast. Neither the gathering of employees of a public body nor the gathering or attendance of two or more members of a public body ~~(a) (1)~~ at any place or function where no part of the purpose of such gathering or attendance is the discussion or transaction of any public business, and such gathering or attendance was not called or prearranged with any purpose of discussing or transacting any business of the public body, or ~~(b) (2)~~ at a public forum, candidate appearance, or debate, the purpose of which is to inform the electorate and not to transact public business or to hold discussions relating to the transaction of public business, even though the performance of the members individually or collectively in the conduct of public business may be a topic of discussion or debate at such public meeting, shall be deemed a "meeting" subject to the provisions of this chapter.

"Open meeting" or "public meeting" means a meeting at which the public may be present.

"Public body" means any legislative body, authority, board, bureau, commission, district or agency of the Commonwealth or of any political subdivision of the Commonwealth, including cities, towns and counties, municipal councils, governing bodies of counties, school boards and planning commissions; governing boards of public institutions of higher education; and other organizations, corporations or agencies in the Commonwealth supported wholly or principally by public funds. It shall include (i) the Virginia Birth-Related Neurological Injury Compensation Program and its board of directors established pursuant to Chapter 50 (§ 38.2-5000 et seq.) of Title 38.2 and (ii) any committee, subcommittee, or other entity however designated, of the public body created to perform delegated functions of the public body or to advise the public body. It shall not exclude any such committee, subcommittee or entity because it has private sector or citizen members. Corporations organized by the Virginia Retirement System are "public bodies" for purposes of this chapter.

For the purposes of the provisions of this chapter applicable to access to public records, constitutional officers and private police departments as defined in § 9.1-101 shall be considered public

53 bodies and, except as otherwise expressly provided by law, shall have the same obligations to disclose
54 public records as other custodians of public records.

55 "Public records" means all writings and recordings that consist of letters, words or numbers, or
56 their equivalent, set down by handwriting, typewriting, printing, photostatting, photography, magnetic
57 impulse, optical or magneto-optical form, mechanical or electronic recording or other form of data
58 compilation, however stored, and regardless of physical form or characteristics, prepared or owned by, or
59 in the possession of a public body or its officers, employees or agents in the transaction of public business.

60 "Regional public body" means a unit of government organized as provided by law within defined
61 boundaries, as determined by the General Assembly, which unit includes two or more localities.

62 "Scholastic records" means those records containing information directly related to a student or an
63 applicant for admission and maintained by a public body that is an educational agency or institution or by
64 a person acting for such agency or institution.

65 "Trade secret" means the same as that term is defined in the Uniform Trade Secrets Act (§ 59.1-
66 336 et seq.).

67 #